

Guide to Personal Safety for Bus Operators



Maryland Department
of Transportation



The safety and security of Maryland Transit Administration employees and customers is the highest priority of the MTA. As an MTA bus operator, you hold the key to making sure that you and your passengers remain safe in a wide variety of circumstances.

Please read this brochure completely. By using the tools and techniques on the following pages, you will be able to maintain control, defuse tensions and promote a positive outcome for a great many situations that might otherwise prove disruptive or dangerous to you and your passengers.

Your safety and the safety of your passengers is our greatest concern.

Keys to Your Personal Security


Your first line of defense for personal security is to be respectful, courteous and informative.

A passenger may become combative for no reason, but sometimes a bus operator may say something that sets off a personal confrontation. Avoid saying things like, "You can't do that on my bus," or, "Do not speak to me like that." Statements like these are unnecessary and may be perceived as provoking an incident.

Be aware of your surroundings.

Remain alert to activities inside and outside the bus. Immediately report suspicious activities and/or items, and "if you see something, say something."

Familiarize yourself with all of your options for calling for help. Know the emergency procedures and telephone numbers.



Don't be a target. Carry a limited amount of money and do not wear expensive or flashy jewelry. Do not expose personal cell phones.

Recognize the warning signs of violent behavior:

- Pacing, restlessness or repetitive movements
- Trembling or shaking
- Clenched jaws or fists
- Exaggerated or violent gestures
- Loud talking or chanting
- Shallow, rapid breathing
- Scowling, sneering or use of abusive language
- Glaring or avoiding eye contact
- Violations of your personal space – in other words, when passengers get too close to you

Defending Yourself or Another Person

Appropriate use of force: It is vitally important that, when being attacked or when defending another person who is being attacked, you use only as much force as necessary to stop the attack. Once the threat is contained, refrain from further action. No further contact with the attacker will be condoned.

Consequences of using excessive force: If MTA investigation reveals that an MTA employee either initiated physical contact or continued to make physical contact after the threat was contained, the employee may face disciplinary actions.

Carrying of weapons by employees is prohibited.



Do's and Don'ts in the Event of a Criminal Incident on Your Bus

DO:

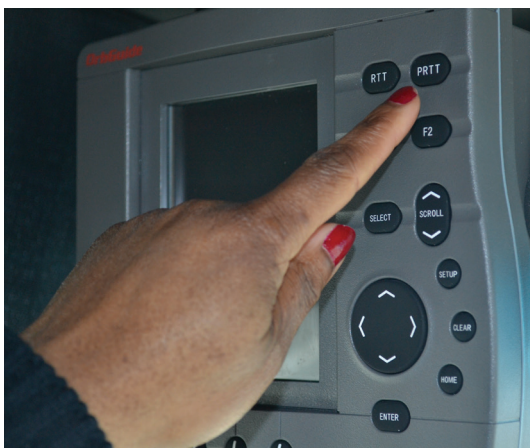
- Stay as calm as possible.
- Commit to memory all the details you can about the perpetrator including gender, race, height, weight, clothing, distinguishing marks and other details to aid police with identification.
- Call for help as quickly as you can safely do so.

DO NOT:

- Do not detain anyone – simply open the front door and release the back door.
- Do not follow the perpetrator off the bus.
- Do not put yourself or your passengers at risk.
- Do not resist a robbery.

Communication Tools

Report a problem on your bus by using the radio: When it is safe to do so, using the bus radio is the best way to communicate your emergency to the Bus Operations Control Center (BOCC). To ensure your call is treated as a priority, use the priority button on the radio. Your call will be answered as quickly as possible. To ensure your call is treated as an emergency, use the silent alarm.



When to Use the Silent Alarm:

The silent (covert) alarm is a tool for you to alert the Bus Operations Control Center (BOCC) that you and your passengers are in a dangerous situation and you do not want to alert the threatening party that you are calling for help. The silent alarm button is activated by placing the tip of your left foot on the button and depressing it once. Once activated, BOCC personnel are alerted. In addition, a covert microphone is activated, allowing BOCC personnel to hear what is happening in your bus.



If they do not hear anything of concern, they will send a coordinator to make contact with the bus. If there is a true emergency, the police will be dispatched immediately.

Security Resources

Coordinators are staged throughout the MTA service area. Coordinators respond to incidents reported by bus operators wherever assistance is needed. If police assistance is also needed, coordinators will remain on the scene to assist and to document.

The MTA Police Patrol unit patrols the bus routes and divisions. The department also deploys officers to ride the buses in both plain clothes and uniforms on troubled routes. Operators may request assistance on troubled routes by filling out the incident form and submitting the form to their respective division management. Management will ensure that the appropriate departments are notified for prompt follow-up and timely resolution. These forms are located at all bus divisions. The Criminal Investigations unit aggressively follows up on operator assault cases.



Local jurisdiction law enforcement:

In an effort to keep response time down, when MTA Police Communications receives a call, they dispatch both the local jurisdiction and the MTA Police. If the local jurisdiction gets there first, they will take control of the situation and then turn it over to MTA Police upon arrival.

The decision to make an arrest is at the discretion of the investigating officer. The decision is generally based on the facts and circumstances surrounding each individual incident. In all cases, the operator must be willing to prosecute.

In some cases, the officer may choose to issue the suspect a criminal citation as opposed to making a physical arrest on the scene. A criminal citation is still considered an arrest. The person receiving the citation will be given a date to appear in court and the witnesses/victim will be subpoenaed by the courts to appear and testify.



Verbal Defusing Skills



Appear calm and self-assured (even if you are afraid) because your anxiety can escalate the anxiety of the other person.

Use a low, even tone of voice.

Remain respectful and do not take the person's behavior personally. It may help to imagine that something happened to upset him/her before getting on your bus.


Deflect the other person's anger.

By saying something like "I'm sorry but it is MTA's policy," you can turn the confrontation into less of a personal issue.

Resist the desire to "win." It just isn't worth it to try and prove you are right.

Practice how to respond. Imagine various scenarios in which you might feel threatened. Walk mentally through each step of how you want to respond. This kind of practice will increase the likelihood that you will handle yourself effectively, even in an extremely stressful situation.





Remember these basic defensive maneuvers: The temptation is always to get out of your seat and stand up when you feel threatened. Often, you are safer remaining in your seat. Why?

- If you remain seated, you are protected on three sides so you know where an attack is coming from.
- You can't be knocked down.
- You can turn to face the door and lean back out of reach from the threatening person.
- You can protect your face and head, where you are most vulnerable to being hurt if someone attacks you.

To Request that Someone be Removed from the Bus



When responding to a complaint from a bus operator-initiated call, responding officer(s) will remove the suspect from the bus if warranted by the criminal activity, or if the officer believes the suspect's actions are a disruption to the operator or service. The responding officer will advise Police Communications of the name of the subject for a warrant check.

What to Expect When You Call for Police



A police officer will respond to the incident location and meet with the employee/victim. In order to conduct a fair and impartial investigation, the officer must remain neutral.

The employee/victim must be willing to prosecute and testify in court.

The officer will interview the victim, witnesses and the suspect to find out the following:

- Who is involved?
- What happened?
- When did it happen?
- Where did it happen?
- Why did it happen?

Pre-Trip and Post-Trip Bus Inspections

Make quick and efficient vehicle inspections part of your normal routine. The purpose of bus pre-trip and post-trip inspections is to confirm that the bus is in good working condition and that it can be safely operated, as well as to ensure that there are no items such as suspicious devices or packages that may present danger to the operator and passengers. Pre-trip inspections should also be performed during layovers or after the bus has been unattended for an extended period. The few minutes you spend doing this may save your life and that of your passengers.





It is important to logon to the Farebox Driver Control Unit, Clever Device and also the Radio before commencing each run. These pre-trip activities are very important as they help responders determine the geographical location of the bus, facilitating speedy response.

MTA cares about the safety and security of you and your passengers. You can help yourself by exercising good judgment, good customer relations skills and by seeking assistance when needed.

Finally, remember that if you notice suspicious behavior on or around MTA vehicles or property, it is important to notify coordinators, division management or police personnel.

If you see something, say something.

Need help? Call BOCC 410-454-7101



IF YOU SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING.

As a bus operator, it's up to you to think "safety" all the time. If you notice an unattended bag, box or other suspicious package, notify your coordinator, division management or MTA Police immediately. Likewise, if you see suspicious behavior such as someone entering an unauthorized area of MTA property, don't confront the person – contact your coordinator, division management or MTA Police right away.

www.securetransit.org

MTA Police Dispatch
410-454-7721

Office of Safety,
Quality Assurance &
Risk Management



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